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THE WORK OF THE CONCILIUM BIBLIO- GRAPHICUM.

HERBERT HAVILAND FIELD.

SINCE the foundation of the Concilium Bibliographicum in January, 1896, no notices concerning its work have been sent to the scientific journals, although statements have occasionally been solicited. The reason for this reticence has been the fact that its work has heretofore been rather of the nature of a vast and expensive experiment than of a publication which could stand before the world as an agency able to render fully the services for which it was called into existence.

In this first or experimental stage all have had to bear a share of the burden, and we have reason to be grateful for the patience which our subscribers have shown under these trying circumstances. Liberal as were the donations to the work, they none the less proved insufficient, and the director of the institute has not merely been obliged to work or rather to over-work for three years without a salary, but has been forced to submit to serious financial loss. At present this has been changed, and although the work cannot become remunerative, yet it may now be regarded as definitely assured, thanks to the permanent subsidy voted to it by the Confederation, the Canton, and the Town. It has been placed under the supervision of a joint commission containing representatives of these several interests.

It must not be supposed from this statement that the Concilium is no longer behindhand in its work. Such a change cannot be accomplished in a few days nor in a few weeks. As a fact, however, more cards are now being issued than would correspond to the actual rate of zoological publication, so that we can see our accumulated manuscript growing daily less. When this shall have been entirely disposed of, we shall be able to obtain the proper benefit from the present arrangement of the work.

In the house with the main offices is a specially equipped composing room, where at present three typesetters and a head typographer give their entire time to the Bureau. In a neighboring building the large cylinder press has been set up, as well as a paper-cutting machine in charge of a special machinist. With this staff of employees, we are able to print and issue nearly 100 different cards a day. For sorting the cards a double check system is used, which makes errors almost impossible.

In regard to classing the cards, we were at first inclined to consider this of secondary importance, the arrangement being the concern of the user. We have found, however, that such a course would be simply disastrous. The entire bibliography is a structure growing by internal additions, as an animal or a plant does. Consequently, every element must have a definite destination. For a catalogue of current literature in pamphlet form such a chapter heading as *Fauna of the Celebees* would be far too detailed; not so for a great catalogue destined to receive the contributions of many years. Indeed, we go much further and arrange the papers on the Celebees according to the animals dealt with. Thus there is a place reserved for the *Lizards of Celebees*; possibly there are already cards at that place, possibly some will be added in the coming year.

It is obvious that our central catalogue can be arranged with such detail; but how can we duplicate such a catalogue in the hands of our subscribers? With such an overwhelming number of divisions, how can one find Celebees? In a book one can have an index with references to the pages; can one not apply a similar system to cards by numbering the places in which cards may be entered? It is evident that such a course is perfectly practicable, and it is this that we have done with the single modification that we have preferred to choose such numbers as would permit us to enlarge our scheme at will. It is needless to explain how this last requisite has been reached. In the past such explanations have been given and have only served to render complicated a very simple matter. It is not at all necessary to understand how logarithms are calculated to use a table for a definite mathematical problem, and so it is with our numbers.

If one is desirous of knowing what has been published in regard to Faunæ, one has only to look in the index to see that they are dealt with in section No. 19. If one is interested in the Celebees one can find them at division 19 (912). People talk of these numbers as if we expected them to be learned by heart, or as if they were intended to convey information by a sort of symbolism. They are not one iota more complicated than the page references in any book index, after one has learned that the numbers are read successively from left to right, so that all numbers beginning with 1 (19, for instance) come before 2, etc. Personally I see no reason for regarding section No. 78, in which we have Anura, as in any sense more complicated as a number than section 435, where they stand in Leunis. Neither does it seem to me too mathematical even for zoologists having an "aversion to numbers." The system is a purely practical device and is not affected by idle talk about the theoretical unsoundness of classifying by groups of tens. Equally irrelevant is the remark that our classification is not scientific. We know it is not, and we often regret that it is not less scientific. I am well aware that the system we use follows the scientific separation of Reptiles from Batrachians; bibliographically, this is of doubtful advantage, and the practical bibliographer often wishes he had some common ground where he could place Herpetology, before entering in upon works dealing with each group by itself. Not until people cease being specialists in regard to both Amphibians and Reptiles will the need for a common division also disappear.

For purposes of subscription almost any conceivable topic will be received, no matter how restricted it may be, the price varying from one-fifth of a cent to one cent a card, according to the size of the order. Innumerable sets cost from ten to twenty cents. Such prices have been fixed in order to establish relations, if possible, with the whole body of zoologists. It seems as if under such conditions 500 subscribers ought to be possible in the United States alone.

The complete series are designed rather for libraries, museums, and laboratories. In our opinion every scientific center should have at least one such set. In the United States, how-

ever, this is far from being the case. Thus, in New England, Williams College has the only such set. On the Atlantic seaboard such orders have been further received from Columbia, Cornell, Pennsylvania, and Princeton. Minnesota has two such ; Iowa and Illinois each one. The more restricted set, in which each paper figures but once, usually in the systematic part, has a far wider circulation. Nine sets go to Massachusetts, one to Rhode Island, a number to the Washington departments, two to Ohio, and one each to Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Kansas. As will be seen from this summary, there are still districts where no complete set can be seen. This is a pity, since we are rapidly nearing the time when no more back sets will be available.¹

In regard to the anatomical and physiological bibliographies, it may be said that they too are nearly ready to be pushed, as is now being done for the zoological portion. A delay took place in consequence of a rupture with our former printer, so that in order to issue the book edition of the *Bibliographia Physiologica* we were obliged to set the entire work a second time. This has been done and we can now return to the cards.

In order to facilitate relations with the United States, Mr. Edward S. Field, of 80 Leonard Street, New York, has been authorized to receive subscriptions. A large number of descriptive circulars will be deposited in his office and may be had on application.

¹ South America has given us many complete orders, as also Hawaii.